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Improving the Performance of Retail Food Store Cashiers Through Better Training ...



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PREFACE

This is a report on methods of training retail food store cashiers in order to increase their efficiency and productivity, and thereby help to hold down the costs of distributing food through this part of the marketing channel. Research along this line was recommended by the industry advisory committee which helps to guide the retail studies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The author had the cooperation and assistance of many individuals and organizations in the retail food industry. Special credit is due Edwin L. Withers, superintendent of stores, Food Fair Supermarkets, Washington, D. C., and Edwin Gordon, general supervisor of Eddie's Supermarkets, Baltimore, Md., and to the managers and cashiers of the stores included in the study.

Special credit also is accorded Harold Hoecker, marketing specialist of Maryland University Extension Service, for conducting the training conferences, and R. W. Hoecker, staff assistant for Distributive Research, Marketing and Facilities Research Branch, for counsel in conducting the study.

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The study was made under authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (RMA, Title II).

SUMMARY

The performance of retail food store employees may be improved considerably more by instruction methods which emphasize employee participation than by methods which rely mainly on written memoranda. In a controlled experiment conducted among food store cashiers, the training method which gave cashiers an opportunity to participate in a group training conference and to help develop new procedures resulted in superior performance. Better performance was shown by more willing acceptance of new checkout procedures, closer adherence to established procedures, more courtesy to customers, better utilization of time, and more employee satisfaction with the instruction received. The experiment was conducted not only to learn whether each of these practices would be improved by the special training, but also to measure the degree of improvement over that obtained by written memoranda.

Labor is a principal item in operating costs of food stores, and high productivity depends on adequately trained and motivated employees, as well as on good equipment and sound operating methods. Increased employee productivity is of immediate help to food retailers and, in the long run, contributes toward reductions in the cost of marketing food.

The study on training methods to improve employee performance was conducted in matched stores of two supermarket organizations located in eastern metropolitan areas.

Cashiers whose instruction consisted principally of a written memorandum followed a suggested new procedure in 60 percent of the customer checkouts. Cashiers given an opportunity to discuss the new procedure before adopting it followed the new practice in 77 percent of the cases.

Closer adherence to established procedures was obtained from the cashiers who received the improved training than from those who received written instructions. Actions required in established checkout procedures were correctly performed in 88 percent of the cases by the group of cashiers given written instructions and in 93 percent of the cases by the group of cashiers whose training included a discussion of established procedures.

Courtesy to customers was increased by improved training. Cashiers whose training was by means of a memorandum followed courtesy practices of greeting and thanking customers in 49 percent of the checkouts; those participating in the training procedure were courteous in 63 percent of the cases.

Cashiers receiving improved training scored substantially better on utilization of time than did those receiving written instructions. Of the ratings given cashiers instructed primarily by written memoranda,

30 percent were excellent and 35 percent were poor. Of ratings given cashiers participating in their instruction, 43 percent were excellent and 14 percent were poor.

The performance of cashiers who received the improved training was better not merely during a 4-week period immediately after the training date, but it was also better 10 weeks later when additional observations were made. Moreover, most of the cashiers who received training in which they participated evidenced positive satisfaction with their training whereas most of the cashiers in the other group were indifferent to the written instructions they had received.

The study showed that a training system which gives cashiers an opportunity to discuss their work, to help develop improvements in required practices, and to participate in a group training conference can produce superior performance. Although results from the study were obtained in two supermarket organizations, similar results probably could be obtained by other food stores following similar training principles. The cost of conducting the training program to improve employee performance such as the system tested in the study was estimated at \$10 per employee trained. Results of the study indicated that more effective training methods would reduce operating costs and improve customer relations.

IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF RETAIL FOOD STORE CASHIERS
THROUGH BETTER TRAINING METHODS

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INTRODUCTION

Although great strides have been made in introducing labor-saving devices and practices in the retailing of food during the last 20 years, labor continues to be the principal cost item in this important segment of the food-marketing channel. Accordingly, measures that will further increase the efficiency and productivity of people engaged in food retailing can help hold down the costs of marketing food and thereby benefit the farmer and the consumer, as well as the retailer.

High employee productivity in food retailing depends not alone on good equipment and sound operating methods; it depends also on adequately trained and motivated employees. Supermarket operators have found that when new equipment and improved practices are introduced, employees in one store will show marked increases in productivity, and those in another store, using the same equipment and procedures, will show very little improvement. Even where procedures have been long established there are considerable differences in how faithfully employees follow the procedures. Thus, the returns expected from improved equipment are not always obtained, and the potential value of well thought out operating procedures is not fully realized. With rising labor costs and the difficulty of recruiting good personnel, food store operators are seeking better means of improving the performance of their employees. Food store managers generally agree that employee performance can be explained in large part by the way employees are instructed.

In order to help the food retailers obtain better adherence to sound operating practices and the full potential value of new procedures, a study was undertaken on methods of instructing employees to improve their performance. The study was divided into three phases: (1) Review of training procedures, customarily followed in the smaller supermarket organizations; (2) the development of a method of instruction designed to be more effective than the method ordinarily used; and (3) conducting of a controlled experiment to test the relative effectiveness of the two methods of instruction.

For this study, cashiers were selected because they account for a substantial part of the total man-hours in self-service food stores and because they are important in maintaining good customer relations. The experiment was conducted in two supermarket organizations, located in eastern metropolitan areas. (Procedures followed in the controlled experiment are included in the Appendix.)

TRAINING METHODS TESTED

The instructing of new employees and improving the performance of employees on the job are both problems in training. This study is concerned with the latter problem. Training in the rudiments of a retailing operation is given when the employee is hired; efforts to improve his performance usually continue as long as he is on the job. Thus, at any given time, the principal training problem for most food retailers is how to improve the performance of their employees.

Two methods of training to improve employee performance were tested: The principal characteristic of one method was written instructions; the main characteristic of the other method was participation by the cashiers in the training program (fig. 1). Training was given to experienced cashiers only. The instruction given them as part of the study was a review of current operating and courtesy practices together with some suggested new procedures.

Training by written instruction. Written instructions and reminders are a basic element in the system followed by smaller supermarket organizations, such as those studied to improve employee performance. In these organizations responsibility for instructing employees is in the hands of the store manager. When a change in operating procedure is made, or when some phase of the procedure followed in checking out customers is to be emphasized, instruction is usually given as follows: 1/ A memorandum is sent from the general supervisor to each of the store managers, calling their attention to the required practice. The store managers, in turn, tell their cashiers, individually or in groups, about the memorandum. If it includes a new practice, the manager sometimes demonstrates how he wants it done. If copies of the memorandum have been supplied, the cashiers are requested to take their copies home and to read them. Because this method of improving cashier performance was customarily used in the organizations studied, stores and cashiers designated for the written instruction method are sometimes referred to in the report as the "control group." (The written instructions distributed among the cashiers in the study are shown in the Appendix.)

Training with cashier participation. This system of improving employee performance included a number of devices to obtain cashier participation in the training process:

1/ Most cashiers hired by the smaller supermarket organizations have had previous supermarket experience. In those instances where the person has not worked as a cashier before, the manager usually has one of the experienced operators show the new employee how to perform the assigned tasks and in general to "look after the new cashier."

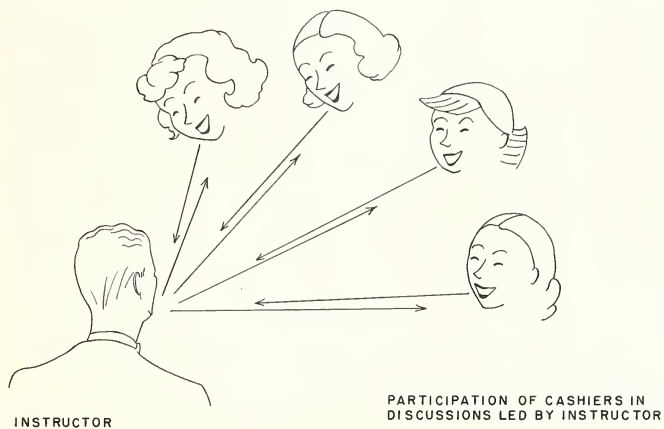
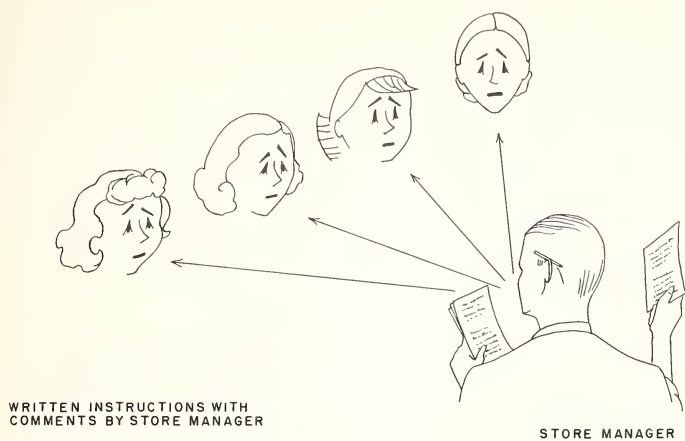


Figure 1.--Comparative methods of training cashiers of retail food stores.

1. The study director visited the stores a number of times prior to the training date, asking the cashiers for their views on various aspects of the checkout operation.

2. The cashiers in several of the stores were asked to help in the development and testing of a new operating procedure to be incorporated in their instruction.

3. A training conference, led by an experienced instructor, was conducted, in which the cashiers as a group were given an opportunity to discuss the checkout operation.

4. At the meeting a motion picture was shown on the subject of courtesy, and a demonstration of the new operating procedure was given by several of the cashiers present. Afterward the group was asked to discuss the motion picture and the demonstration.

An explanation of how each training device affected performance is given under the headings dealing with individual aspects of the checkout operation. Because this system of training was devised for testing in the study, it is sometimes referred to in the report as the "experimental" training and the stores and cashiers designated for this method of instruction are referred to as the "experimental" group. (The training guide used in conducting the meeting of cashiers is included in the Appendix.)

The manner in which the study was conducted introduced some important elements of training which affected the performance of cashiers in both groups. These elements were: (1) Close and consistent followup; and (2) evidence of management interest in the cashier's work. In conducting the study, systematic observations were made of each cashier's performance for the purpose of evaluating training effectiveness. These observations operated as a followup on the training; the presence of the observers undoubtedly reminded the cashiers of the instructions they had received and made them feel that they were "on exhibit." Therefore, they probably performed better than otherwise might have been the case. The cashiers were also made to feel that management was taking a special interest in their work. The operators were aware that they were the objects of a study in which management was interested. Such evidence of interest would likely result in improved performance if nothing more were done. Cashiers probably know how to do their job better than they actually do it and almost any special attention is likely to make them more aware of how well they are performing. The written instruction which served as the principal means of training for the cashiers in the control group of stores was also given to the cashiers who received the experimental training.

It should probably be assumed that the level of performance recorded for cashiers in this study was somewhat higher than would normally be attained by the training methods described; this was particularly true where training was principally by written instruction. The training methods were probably made more effective by the interest shown in the cashiers and by strong followup. Moreover, the cashiers included in the study had already attained a level of performance reasonably acceptable to management. The significance of the study lies, however, in the difference in performance between the two groups. Differences reported between the two methods of training may be attributed primarily to the fact that cashiers of one group were given a more significant part in their instruction, by such devices as informal discussions and by participation in a training conference.

RESULTS OF THE CONTROLLED EXPERIMENT

Increasing Acceptance of New Operating Procedures

Food store operators recognize that one of the principal factors limiting operating efficiency is employees' resistance to change and unwillingness to accept new operating procedures. To determine whether improved training methods could increase acceptance, one new operating procedure was introduced and tested in each of the organizations studied.

In organization A, the new procedure was to use the stepdown at the end of the check stand when bagging orders which required large bags. In organization B, the new procedure was to announce the amount of money which the customer tendered in payment before making change. 2/

The relative effectiveness of the two training methods in obtaining acceptance of the new procedure was measured as follows: Tallies were made of each customer checked out by the cashier during 30-minute observation periods, and of the times that the new procedure was not followed when it was required in the checkout operation. From these tallies, computations were made for each cashier, showing the percentage of times that the new procedure had been followed.

The cashier-participation method of training proved more effective than did the written instruction method in both grocery organizations. Cashiers who received the experimental training followed the new procedure more frequently than did the control group of cashiers. In organization A, the new procedure was followed in 69 percent of the cases by cashiers instructed by memorandum, and in 90 percent of the cases by cashiers whose instruction included participation. In organization B, the new procedure was followed in 51 percent of the checkouts by the control group of cashiers and 64 percent by the experimental group (fig. 2). The combined score for acceptance of the new procedure was 60 and 77 percent, respectively. (The performance of individual cashiers, the average of cashiers in each store, and the average for all stores are shown in tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix.)

The experimental training probably was more effective because participation gave the cashiers a greater inclination to cooperate in the new practice. The views of the cashiers were solicited on the feasibility and desirability of the new procedure. Some cashiers were given an opportunity to try it, and an effort was made to overcome objections

2/ Most cashiers in organization A had been announcing the amount of money given by the customer; in organization B, few stores had check stands with stepdowns.

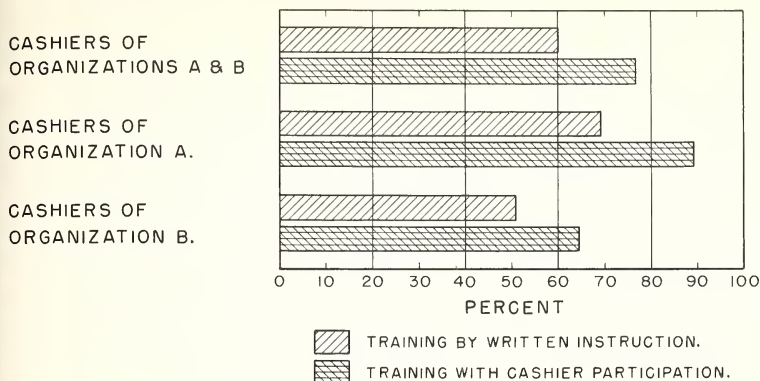


Figure 2.--Comparative percentages of checkouts in which new procedures were followed by method of training.

when encountered. During the training conferences, the cashiers who had participated in developing the new procedure were given a brief opportunity to tell about their experiences. In most cases, they told the other cashiers of the advantages they had found in trying the new procedure.

By taking part in the adoption of the new procedure, the cashiers had an opportunity to convince themselves that the new method was worthwhile before being instructed to follow it. Thus, the changed procedure was not handed down as a directive from management but was a decision in which the cashiers had a voice. In the meeting, the acceptance of the new procedure by most of the group tended to convince the few cashiers who were reluctant to accept it that it might be better; others were willing to try it in order to go along with the group. Acceptance of the new procedure in the presence of other cashiers tended to bind each one in the group to following the procedure.

Results of this study indicated that greater acceptance of a new operating procedure may be obtained if the employees concerned have a voice in developing and testing the new procedure and agree as a group to try it. This does not mean that the new ideas must come from the employees; rather, it means that pending changes might be discussed with the employees and, if modifications appear to be necessary for effective

implementation, they can probably be made to better advantage before the new procedure is formally announced rather than after possible employee resistance is encountered.

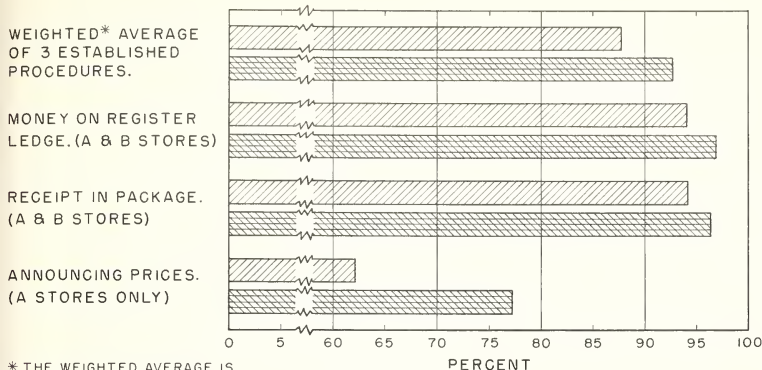
Obtaining Closer Adherence to Established Checkout Procedures

Food store operators are aware that despite specific instructions on how to perform the checkout operations, cashiers do not always follow established procedures. When stores have developed efficient operating practices, and the cashiers do not follow instructions, the full benefit of sound operating procedures will not be obtained. In order to test whether improved training could bring about a closer adherence to established procedures, performance of certain aspects of the checkout operation were observed: Placing money on the register ledge before making change and placing the register receipt in the package; and, in organization A, announcing prices as the items purchased were rung-up on the register. ^{3/}

Results of the study showed that the experimental training brought about a closer adherence to established practices than did the written instructions. Where the practices tested were followed in a high proportion of checkouts before the training date, training with cashier participation resulted in a more nearly perfect performance; where performance was lower before the study, improvements were more marked. Cashiers receiving written instruction followed the practice of putting money on the register ledge in 94 percent of their checkouts and placing register receipts in the package in 94 percent of the cases. On the other hand, cashiers receiving the special training followed these practices in approximately 97 and 96 percent of the checkouts, respectively. The practice of announcing prices was followed in 62 percent of the checkouts by cashiers receiving written instructions and in 77 percent of the checkouts by cashiers who participated in their instruction. An average of the performances obtained by cashiers in each group of stores showed that the control group followed established practices in 88 percent of the checkouts, and the group receiving experimental instruction scored 93 percent (fig. 3). (Tables 5 and 6 in the Appendix show the performances of individual cashiers and stores, and the average for all cashiers in organizations A and B.)

In evaluating how effective training with employee participation was in obtaining closer adherence to prescribed checkout procedures, it should be borne in mind that two of the actions used as a basis for measuring differences (placing money on the register ledge and placing

^{3/} This practice was not tested in organization B since it was not part of its established checkout procedure.



* THE WEIGHTED AVERAGE IS COMPUTED BY GIVING THE PRACTICE USED IN ONLY ONE GROUP OF STORES A WEIGHT OF 1 & THE PRACTICE USED IN TWO GROUPS OF STORES, A WEIGHT OF 2.

TRAINING BY WRITTEN INSTRUCTION.
 TRAINING WITH CASHIER PARTICIPATION.

Figure 3.--Comparative percentages of checkouts in which established procedures were followed by method of training.

register receipts in the package) had been stressed repeatedly in both organizations studied, and a relatively high level of performance had been obtained prior to the study. Accordingly, the improvement noted for these two practices as a result of the experimental training appears small; however, it brings the performance considerably closer to a perfect score. Differences obtained in organization B for these practices were greater than those in organization A and may be attributed to the lower level of performance in organization B stores prior to the study. In the third practice tested in organization A, performance before the study was relatively low and the difference between the two groups of cashiers owing to their training was relatively high.

Since both groups of cashiers were similarly familiar with the checkout practices described above, differences in their performance can probably be attributed to differences in desire to render good performance. Cashiers who were given an opportunity to discuss the several aspects of the checkout operation covered in the training probably re-freshed their memories concerning the sound reasons behind established

practices, and they reaffirmed, as part of the training group, their willingness to follow the procedures. 4/

Where an effort has been made to devise the most efficient operating procedures possible, a comparable effort should be made to have employees follow the instructions. Results of the study showed that one way in which closer adherence to established procedures may be obtained is through the application of the experimental training system.

Improving Courtesy to Customers

Food store operators recognize that friendly courtesy plays an important part in determining where the homemaker will shop for food; store employees can help to make shopping a pleasant experience rather than a household chore. With the growth of self-service operations, it has become increasingly difficult for store managers to maintain a close, friendly relationship with their customers. An attempt to effect good customer relations has focused attention on the checkout operation and the cashiers, since they are the store's principal contact with customers. Accordingly, food store operators have tried to impress on their cashiers the importance of being courteous to customers. These efforts have met with varying degrees of success. On the assumption that cashier courtesy is, in part, a reflection of the instruction received, observations were taken to determine whether improved training would affect courteousness.

Cashier courtesy was measured by two factors: (1) The extent to which the cashiers greeted customers as they entered the check stand;

4/ The third practice observed in organization A illustrates this point. Despite management's repeated emphasis, the practice of announcing the price of items as they were rung-up on the register was not followed faithfully. Cashiers gave as their justification that calling prices slowed the checkout operation. In the meeting of cashiers, it was demonstrated that although announcing the prices made the checkout somewhat slower it forced a pace which permitted a customer to check each item rung-up. On the other hand, without calling prices a cashier tended to ring-up items so rapidly that some customers might conclude they were purposely denied an opportunity to check the correctness of each item entered in the register. When it was made clear that these customer considerations were uppermost in management's mind, the soundness of the procedure was manifested and the cashiers' justification for not following instructions was overcome. Discussion and participation in the demonstration were decisive factors in obtaining better adherence to the required procedure.

and (2) the extent to which cashiers extended a parting courtesy as customers left the check stand. It was assumed that the customer was greeted if, when she entered the check stand, the cashier acknowledged her presence in some fashion such as by saying "hello" or "good morning," or by referring to the customer by name. It was assumed that a parting courtesy had been extended when the customer had been thanked as she was handed her change, or as she was handed her package, or when the cashier asked whether the customer would like carry-out service. Tone of voice, pleasantness of manner, and other evidences of courtesy were not tallied. Although such other factors may also be regarded as part of customer courtesy, it was assumed that the two aspects recorded would fairly represent a cashier's courteousness. Any other index of cashier courtesy would probably show similar results.

The training procedure which included participation by the cashiers proved more effective than did training by written instruction in improving courtesy to customers. Cashiers receiving written instructions greeted 38 percent of their customers and extended a parting courtesy to 60 percent. On the other hand, cashiers given the experimental instruction greeted their customers in 52 percent of the checkouts and extended a parting courtesy in 73 percent of the checkouts (fig. 4). The average courtesy score was 49 percent and 63 percent, respectively. (Tables 7 and 8 in the Appendix show the performance of individual cashiers, the average performance for the cashiers in each store, and the average for both groups of cashiers, for organizations A and B.)

The improved performance recorded for the cashiers who received the experimental training may be attributed in large part to the manner in which the subject of courtesy was covered in the training conference. Both groups of cashiers received a memorandum requesting that they be courteous to customers and indicating the importance of customer courtesy to the cashier as well as to the store. However, in addition, the group of cashiers who were given the experimental training spent about 40 minutes on the subject of courtesy in their training conference. A motion picture was shown which covered the subject in very general terms and made the point that friendly courtesy redounded to the employee's benefit, as well as to that of his organization. 5/ During the conference, the kinds of problem situations encountered by the cashiers were discussed and ways to handle them were evaluated in the light of the solutions offered by individual cashiers. It is believed that this emphasis on courtesy and the techniques employed would make a deeper impression on the cashiers than would a written statement in the memorandum.

5/ The motion picture was entitled "By Jupiter" and had been developed by Marshal Field and Company as part of a program to make store personnel more courteous.

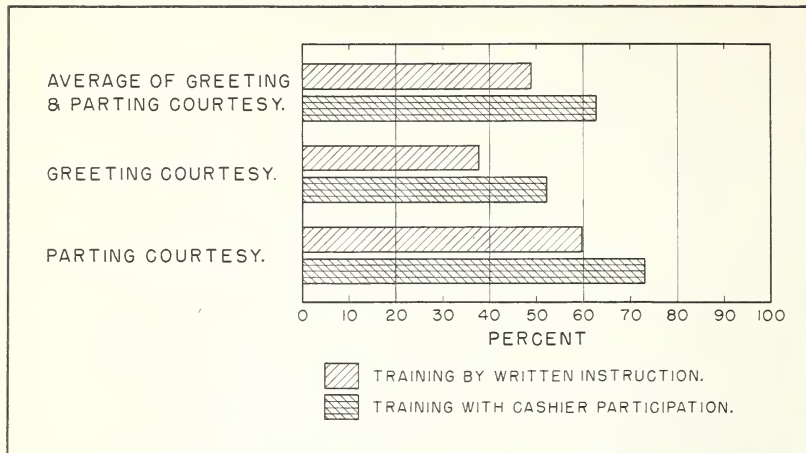


Figure 4.--Comparative percentages of checkouts in which courtesy practices were followed by method of training.

It may be noted that cashiers tendered a parting courtesy more often than they greeted customers on entering the check stand (see fig. 4). The reason appears to be that, in counting back change, most cashiers have acquired the habit of saying "thank you" until it has become almost mechanical. Greeting customers when they enter the check stand, however, requires the cashier to adapt herself to individual customer relationships, and therefore greeting is not performed mechanically. A greater improvement was registered by cashiers of organization B than that for organization A. Most cashiers in the first organization had been following courteous practices rather faithfully; therefore, a principal reason for the better results achieved by organization B probably constituted the different level of courtesy from which improvement in performance was measured.

It has been generally assumed that customers respond to courtesy and that homemakers will prefer to be checked out by a cashier who has treated them courteously. Data obtained in the study confirmed this view. In almost every store where statistics were gathered, the cashiers with high courtesy scores checked out more customers; those less courteous checked out fewer customers. For example, in one store a cashier with a courtesy score of 55 averaged 34 customer checkouts per hour, and in the same store a cashier making a courtesy score of 88 averaged 44 customer checkouts per hour. Part of this difference may be owing to the greater efficiency of the second cashier, but the

more courteous cashiers do not always check out a customer more rapidly. The difference more likely was caused by more customers presenting themselves at the check stand of the second cashier during the week (table 1).

Table 1.--Relationship between cashier courtesy and number of customers checked out in 6 supermarket B stores, 1952 1/

Store and cashier	Courtesy score <u>2/</u>	Customer checkouts
	Percent	per hour Number
Store No. 1:		
Cashier--		
a.....	63	28
b.....	71	30
c.....	41	24
Store No. 2:		
Cashier--		
d <u>3/</u>	-	-
e.....	55	34
f.....	88	44
Store No. 3: <u>4/</u>		
Store No. 4:		
Cashier--		
g.....	29	32
h.....	28	30
i.....	26	30
Store No. 5:		
Cashier--		
j.....	71	31
k.....	49	31
l.....	76	44
Store No. 6:		
Cashier--		
m.....	53	40
n.....	56	36

1/ Based on checkout records for 1 week and courtesy score for a 4-week period.

2/ The percentage of customers greeted on entering and on leaving the check stand divided by 2.

3/ Worked at check stand less than 24 hours during the week.

4/ Data not comparable with those of other stores.

It is likely that during peak business periods customers are primarily concerned with rapid checkout service. If their favorite cashier cannot check them out promptly, they are likely to go to another check stand where they may be processed more quickly. However, the customers who shop during the week and are familiar with the several cashiers will usually present their orders to the cashier who has been most friendly. Apparently, other factors being the same, customers choose to be checked out by the more courteous cashiers in the store.

Achieving Better Utilization of Cashier Time

In most supermarkets, customer traffic is not steady, and for several hours each day the cashiers are not fully occupied at the check stands. This occurs despite the procedure followed in most stores of having the full-time cashiers take their day off early in the week and despite the use of part-time cashiers during peak hours. Thus, although efficiencies introduced in the checkout operation to facilitate the handling of rush hour traffic affect an important part of the cashier's workday, the manner in which the time is occupied when customer traffic does not require constant attendance at the check stand affects a substantial part of the cashier's workday and the overall labor costs of the food store.

Observations indicated that the experimental training procedure proved considerably more effective than did training by memorandum in obtaining good utilization of time. Time utilization was evaluated on the basis of two criteria: (1) How usefully the cashier spent the time not used for serving customers at the check stand; and (2) how well the cashier maintained the displays which were part of the check stand, or immediately adjacent to it. Ratings of "excellent," "fair," and "poor" were given on both these counts during each 30-minute period in which the cashiers were observed. Of 96 ratings, given the cashiers trained by memorandum, on how well they spent their time when not serving customers, 33.0 percent were rated excellent and 30.5 percent were rated poor. Among cashiers participating in their instruction, 82 ratings were given: 36.5 percent were rated excellent; and 18.5 percent were rated poor.

Similar ratings were given on display maintenance. Of the cashiers instructed principally by memorandum, 26.5 percent received ratings of excellent and 41.5 percent rated poor. On the other hand, of the cashiers given training which included employee participation, 49.5 percent received ratings of excellent and 10 percent received poor ratings. Table 2 shows details of the ratings for organizations A and B and the total observations for both groups of cashiers.

Excellent use of time was credited when the cashier was usefully occupied in such activities as helping another cashier, cleaning out the check stand, arranging check stand displays, and so forth, when no customers were at the check stand. A poor rating was given when the cashier did nothing constructive during such slow periods but instead lounged at the check stand or talked with other cashiers. No rating was given if, during the 30-minute period observed, the cashier was continuously checking out customers. Excellent display maintenance meant neatness, cleanliness, and full stocks in the displays about the check stand. Poor display maintenance showed an absence of such conditions.

The greater effectiveness of the experimental training may be attributed to cashier discussion of the subject. The memorandum given to all cashiers emphasized the importance of good utilization of time and stated that maintaining display stands adjacent to the check stand was one good way of using available time. In addition, during conversations before the training date with cashiers receiving the experimental instruction, the idea was advanced that keeping busy made the day pass more quickly and left the person less fatigued. Discussion with the cashiers brought agreement on this point and the training conference developed a similar conclusion. It is likely that this idea, when articulated and agreed to by the cashiers themselves, motivated them to make better use of their time.

Many store managers inform their cashiers about tasks that can be done at times when traffic at the check stand is slow, and the managers often request that the cashiers ask for other assignments around the store when they have additional time. However, many cashiers are reluctant to seek out the manager for other work, and store managers are not always available. In practice, cashiers usually take up other tasks only when they have stood at the check stand for a considerable period of time without having customers to serve, or when the manager comes by and requests one or more of the idle cashiers to do some specific task. Results of this study suggested that increased employee industry may be obtained by discussing the subject with employees from their point of view and by obtaining agreement on: (1) The value to the employee of good utilization of time; and (2) the specific "fill-in" tasks that may be done without consulting the store manager. Effectively used, this approach passes the responsibility and the compulsion for good utilization of time from the manager to the employee.

Achieving Long-Term Benefits of Training

One of the problems encountered by grocers is that although instructions may be followed for a short period of time after they are given, they are often quickly forgotten. To ascertain whether improved training would be more effective in this connection, observations were taken of cashiers in organization B approximately 10 weeks after the

training date. The findings suggested that instruction in which the cashiers participated was more effective than was instruction by memorandum.

Ten weeks after instructions were given, the cashiers who received the experimental training continued to show better performance than did the cashiers receiving written instructions. In customer courtesy both groups showed improved performance, but the difference between the two groups was about the same as that during the weeks immediately after the instruction. In following the new procedure both groups were similarly improved after 10 weeks, but here again the performance of the cashiers trained by a system which included their participation was better than that of the control group. The continued improvement registered by both groups of cashiers in customer courtesy and in following the new procedure may be attributed to the close followup given. Both groups of cashiers showed somewhat poorer performance in established checkout procedures after 10 weeks than that in the 4-week period immediately after training. However, the decline registered by cashiers given written instruction was considerably greater than that of cashiers receiving experimental training.

The poorer performance in established procedures recorded for both groups of cashiers raises the question: Is there a point at which performance levels off and no further improvement is likely? The conclusion suggested by observations of how well established practices were followed is that when cashiers are following the required procedure in 9 out of 10 checkouts further improvement is difficult. The cashiers receiving written instructions followed the established procedures in almost 90 percent of the checkouts before the study; there was little gain in the period immediately following instruction, and 10 weeks later a slight decline was recorded for the group. The cashiers whose training included participation, starting from a comparable level, showed an improvement in the 4 weeks after their instruction, and 10 weeks later their performance remained better than it was before instruction. However, for these cashiers, too, performance appears to have reached a level at little above 90 percent of customer checkouts (fig. 5).

Winning Employee Satisfaction with Instruction

At the conclusion of the study, cashiers were interviewed separately to get their opinions on the training. Among the group of cashiers receiving written instructions primarily, none considered the memorandum they had received, or the manager's comments on it, as being unusual in any way. Almost every cashier in this group said the memorandum contained nothing new, that it was merely a reminder to do the things they had been doing. Most cashiers felt that it would have been helpful if there had been some discussion of the memorandum.

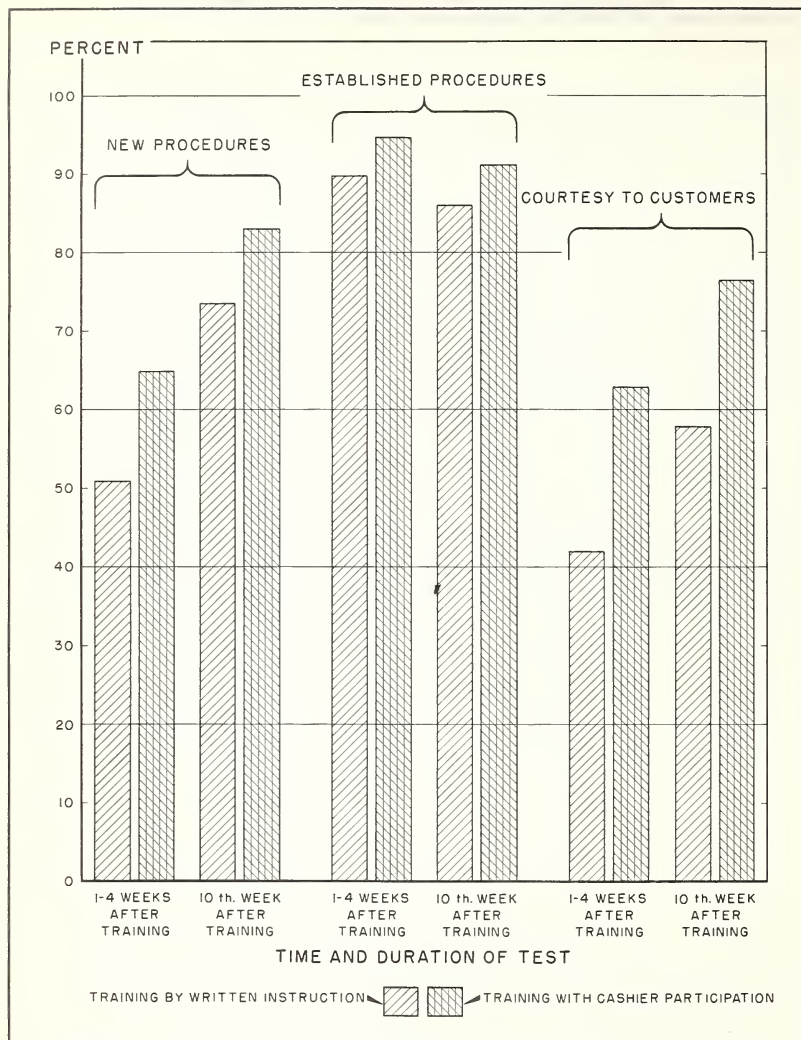


Figure 5.--Comparative percentages of checkouts in which specified procedures were followed by method of training, organization B.

On the other hand, most cashiers given the experimental training expressed positive satisfaction with their instructions. Almost all said they had learned something new (although the same points were covered as those in the memorandum to the control group). Several cashiers said the training session had been "fun," and that similar review sessions should be held from time to time. Several cashiers also mentioned that they had become more aware of why certain actions (for example, announcing prices as items were rung-up) were necessary in the checkout operation and, as a result, they had decided to follow their instructions.

STORE MANAGERS, TRAINING, AND CASHIER PERFORMANCE

Manager attitude toward employees is an important factor in the performance of cashiers, and manager attitude also accounts for some of the differences found among cashiers receiving the same kind of instruction. Among stores in which training was by written instruction as well as among those where training included employee participation, cashiers rendered superior performance where the managers were most concerned with personnel relations. The manager of each of the stores included in the study was interviewed to obtain his general approach toward employees and his specific views on methods of instruction. As a group, managers of stores designated for written instruction and those in stores designated for the experimental instruction had similar views toward employees.

Most of the managers had not considered the possibilities of alternative training methods. The procedure they usually followed of telling each employee what was to be done and personally demonstrating performance of the task or asking an experienced person to show how it was done, was thought to be the only way. When asked how they would go about improving employee performance, few had concrete suggestions. Significantly, the four managers who had apparently given previous thought to the problem and expressed ideas on the subject had cashiers whose performance was well above the average in both groups of stores.

When asked to select from among several methods of instructing employees the procedure most likely to be effective, those voting for employee participation were obtaining better than average cashier performance. Managers who favored the approach of "telling them" and "making them toe the line" did not get as good performance from their cashiers in either the control stores or those designated for the experimental training as did managers who were concerned with personnel relations.

Although the relationship between supervision and performance is complex, some ways of dealing with cashiers are likely to be more productive than are others. An approach of drawing out the best that is in people appears to be more effective than attempting to enforce fixed rules without opportunity for discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

Results of the study showed that the performance of food store cashiers can be substantially improved by improving the training methods. Improvements become evident in various ways: More willingness to accept new operating procedures; better adherence to established procedures; more courtesy to customers; and better utilization of time on the job. These results were obtained in studies conducted with two food store organizations. Similar results probably could be obtained by other food stores if the same training methods were followed.

It cannot be overemphasized, however, that the superior performance was obtained by a training system that was more than a meeting of cashiers to tell them what was wanted. Good training not only informs employees of what should be done but also motivates them to do it.

Fundamental to the experimental training was its concern with both aspects of training and its emphasis on cashier participation. The informal visits to the stores before the training conference and the specific request for the help of cashiers in developing and testing new checkout practices were employed to give cashiers a sense of contributing to their own instruction. The meeting of the cashiers in the experimental training was another means of obtaining cashier participation. Of course, the meeting helped in other ways as well: It permitted a demonstration on important points in the checkout operation and it facilitated group agreement on following recommended practices. The motion picture on courtesy was important for this aspect of the cashier's job. It would be difficult to determine accurately the contribution made by each training device employed; however, it appears clear that the emphasis on cashier participation in the experimental-training system was a decisive factor in its effectiveness.

The cost of conducting training programs to improve employee performance such as the experimental system tested in this study was estimated at approximately \$10 per employee trained. This included the cost of the trainer and the cashiers' time spent in a meeting. The techniques employed in the experimental-training system do not call for a professional trainer. A comparable program probably could be worked out in most grocery organizations in the following manner: (1) Select an outstanding cashier to serve as management assistant for the program. (2) Ask this cashier to take off several days over a period of 2 or 3 weeks to visit cashiers in other stores of the organization, to get their views on the work and what ought to be covered in a meeting of all cashiers. (3) Have this cashier lead the training conference or assist the person from management (or from outside sources) who conducts the meeting. (4) Make it known that the program is a continuing one and that at specified intervals, for example, every 3 months, other cashiers will be given the assignment of working with management to conduct a meeting of cashiers.

The above suggestions are designed to introduce employee participation in the training system, to give special recognition to cashiers for whom such incentive would be desirable, and to minimize the cost of conducting a continuing training program along the lines proved effective in this study.

Although this study was limited to training cashiers, it appears likely that the same methods could be employed with comparable results on other groups of food store employees. For example, if better methods of training to improve performance of stock clerks were employed, it could be expected that there would be better utilization of time, closer adherence to established procedures, and more willing acceptance of new methods of work. Worthwhile savings in labor costs would result from such improved performance. Results of this study suggest that returns from more effective training probably could be measured by dollars saved in store operations as well as in better customer relations.

APPENDIX

Table 3.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which new procedure was followed, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization A, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Customer	Procedure
	checkouts	followed
	Number	Percent
<u>Training by written instruction in--</u>		
Store No. 1:		
Cashier--		
a.....	19	36.8
b.....	15	93.3
c.....	17	58.8
Total or average.....	51	63.0
Store No. 2:		
Cashier--		
d.....	28	92.9
e.....	16	81.3
f.....	31	54.8
g.....	41	53.7
Total or average.....	116	70.7
Store No. 3:		
Cashier--		
h.....	36	88.9
i.....	18	44.4
Total or average.....	54	66.6
Store No. 4:		
Cashier--		
j.....	37	59.5
k.....	56	85.7
Total or average.....	93	72.6
Store No. 5:		
Cashier--		
l.....	20	80.0
m.....	35	68.6
Total or average.....	55	74.3
Total or average, all cashiers.....	369	69.1
<u>Training with cashier participation in--</u>		
Store No. 6:		
Cashier--		
n.....	43	86.0
o.....	18	94.4
p.....	35	91.4
Total or average.....	96	90.6

Table 3.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which new procedure was followed, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization A, 1952--Continued

Training method, store, and cashier	Customer	Procedure
	checkouts	followed
	Number	Percent
<u>Training with cashier participation in--</u>	:	:
Continued	:	:
Store No. 7:	:	:
Cashier--	:	:
q.....	30	100.0
r.....	39	92.3
s.....	38	100.0
t.....	33	87.9
u.....	31	61.3
Total or average.....	171	88.3
Store No. 8:	:	:
Cashier--	:	:
v.....	-	1/ -
w.....	-	-
x.....	-	-
Total or average, all cashiers.....	267	89.5

1/ Not rated since check stands in this store did not have requisite stepdown.

Table 4.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which new procedure was followed, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization B, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Customer	Procedure
	checkouts	followed
	Number	Percent
<u>Training by written instructions in--</u>		
Store No. 1:		
Cashier--		
a.....	68	60.3
b.....	60	35.0
c.....	40	40.0
Total or average.....	168	45.1
Store No. 2:		
Cashier--		
d.....	54	63.0
e.....	49	32.7
f.....	33	66.7
Total or average.....	136	54.1
Store No. 3:		
Cashier--		
g.....	53	62.3
h.....	35	37.1
i.....	30	60.0
Total or average.....	118	53.1
Total or average, all cashiers.....	422	50.8
<u>Training with cashier participation in--</u>		
Store No. 4:		
Cashier--		
j.....	61	73.8
k.....	40	72.5
l.....	34	58.8
Total or average.....	135	68.4
Store No. 5:		
Cashier--		
m.....	57	40.4
n.....	46	73.9
o.....	36	75.0
Total or average.....	139	63.1
Store No. 6:		
Cashier--		
p.....	21	57.1
q.....	43	62.8
Total or average.....	64	60.0
Total or average, all cashiers.....	338	64.3

Table 5.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which established procedure was followed in supermarket organization A, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Established procedure : Putting money on : Placing register : Announcing									
	adherence score		register ledge		receipt in package		prices of items			
	(average of three practices)		Customer:Practice:		Customer:Practice:		Customer:Practice:		Customer:Practice:	
	Percent		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Training by written instruction in--</u>										
Store No. 1:										
Cashier--										
a.....	85.1		48	95.8	49	100.0	52	59.6		
b.....	78.4		39	97.4	44	97.5	47	40.4		
c.....	92.9		42	90.5	45	97.5	54	90.7		
Total or average.....	85.5		129	94.6	138	98.3	153	63.6		
Store No. 2:										
Cashier--										
d.....	89.9		58	94.8	62	100.0	48	75.0		
e.....	72.2		39	100.0	40	100.0	30	16.7		
f.....	86.9		60	96.7	62	98.5	58	65.5		
g.....	84.8		42	95.2	44	100.0	44	59.1		
Total or average.....	83.5		199	96.7	208	99.6	180	54.1		
Store No. 3:										
Cashier--										
h.....	96.2		30	97.0	36	97.0	36	94.6		
i.....	81.4		35	97.1	35	100.0	34	47.1		
Total or average.....	88.8		65	97.1	71	98.5	70	70.9		
Store No. 4:										
Cashier--										
j.....	87.7		64	98.4	69	96.6	66	68.2		
k.....	82.7		60	96.7	62	98.5	68	52.9		
Total or average.....	85.3		124	97.6	131	97.6	134	60.6		

Table 5.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which established procedure was followed in supermarket organization A, 1952--Continued

	Established procedure : Putting money on : Placing register : Announcing									
	adherence score (average of three practices)	register ledge : receipt in package : prices of items	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice	Customer:Practice
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
<u>Training by written instruction in--</u>										
Continued										
Store No. 5:										
Cashier--										
l.....	86.8	35	100.0	44	100.0	43	60.5			
m.....	92.5	58	100.0	58	100.0	58	77.6			
Total or average.....	89.7	93	100.0	102	100.0	101	69.1			
Total or average, all cashiers ...	86.0	610	96.9	650	98.9	638	62.1			
<u>Training with cashier participation</u>										
in--										
Store No. 6:										
Cashier--										
n.....	98.0	50	96.0	52	100.0	51	98.0			
o.....	91.5	33	93.9	36	97.2	36	83.3			
p.....	69.4	57	94.7	63	96.8	48	16.7			
Total or average.....	86.3	140	94.9	151	98.0	135	66.0			
Store No. 7:										
Cashier--										
q.....	93.6	52	98.1	52	100.0	52	82.7			
r.....	84.8	60	95.0	61	100.0	59	59.3			
s.....	93.3	45	100.0	55	100.0	55	80.0			
t.....	96.5	76	100.0	77	100.0	77	89.6			
u.....	94.2	58	93.1	58	100.0	57	89.5			
Total or average.....	92.5	291	97.2	303	100.0	300	80.2			
Store No. 8:										
Cashier--										
v.....	95.7	69	100.0	55	100.0	69	87.0			
w.....	89.4	70	100.0	56	100.0	69	68.1			
x.....	97.7	77	100.0	59	98.3	78	94.9			
Total or average.....	94.2	216	100.0	170	99.4	216	83.3			
Total or average, all cashiers.....	91.3	647	97.3	624	99.3	651	77.2			

Table 6.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which established procedure was followed in supermarket organization B, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Established : procedure, ad- herence score		Putting money : on register ledge		Placing register : receipt in package	
	: (average of		: Customer:Practice:		: Customer:Practice:	
	: two practices)		: checkouts:followed:		: checkouts:followed:	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>Training by</u>						
<u>written instruc-</u>						
<u>tion in--</u>						
Store No. 1:						
Cashier--						
a.....	91.0	66	95.5	66	86.4	
b.....	83.6	61	88.5	61	78.7	
c.....	87.8	41	87.8	41	87.8	
Total or						
average..	87.5	168	90.6	168	84.3	
Store No. 2:						
Cashier--						
d.....	90.6	53	88.7	53	92.5	
e.....	93.4	51	94.1	54	92.6	
f.....	93.2	36	88.9	39	97.4	
Total or						
average..	92.4	140	90.6	146	94.2	
Store No. 3:						
Cashier--						
g.....	95.1	57	96.5	47	93.6	
h.....	82.9	35	82.9	35	82.9	
i.....	94.4	39	97.4	35	91.4	
Total or						
average..	90.8	131	92.3	117	89.3	
Total or average:						
all cashiers..	90.2	439	91.1	431	89.3	
<u>Training with</u>						
<u>cashier partici-</u>						
<u>pation in--</u>						
Store No. 4:						
Cashier--						
j.....	95.5	66	95.5	66	95.5	
k.....	93.6	45	95.6	47	91.5	
l.....	95.6	45	95.6	45	95.6	
Total or						
average..	94.9	156	95.6	158	94.2	

Table 6.--Relationship between training methods and proportion of customer checkouts in which established procedure was followed in supermarket organization B, 1952--Continued

Training method, store, and cashier	Established : procedure, ad- herence score		Putting money : on register ledge		Placing register : receipt in package	
	(average of two practices)		Customer: checkouts:		Practice: checkouts:	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
<u>Training with</u>						
<u>cashier partici-</u>						
<u>pation in--</u>						
Continued						
Store No. 5:						
Cashier--						
m.....	98.6	73	100.0	72	97.2	
n.....	90.6	53	90.6	53	90.6	
o.....	92.7	34	100.0	34	85.3	
Total or						
average..	94.0	160	96.9	159	91.0	
Store No. 6:						
Cashier--						
p.....	92.6	27	92.6	27	92.6	
q.....	98.9	43	100.0	45	97.8	
Total or						
average..	95.8	70	96.3	72	95.2	
Total or average,						
all cashiers...	94.8	386	96.2	389	93.3	

Table 7.--Relationship between training methods and cashier courtesy, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization A, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Courtesy : score (aver-	Greeting courtesy		Parting courtesy	
	age of greeting	Customer	Practice	Customer	Practice
	and parting (courtesy)	checkouts	followed	checkouts	followed
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Training by					
written instruc-					
tion in--					
Store No. 1:					
Cashier--					
a.....	66.9	46	50.0	49	83.7
b.....	47.7	43	32.6	43	62.8
c.....	67.5	43	60.5	43	74.4
Total or					
average:	60.7	132	47.7	135	73.6
Store No. 2:					
Cashier--					
d.....	37.3	59	23.8	59	50.8
e.....	27.4	41	12.2	40	42.5
f.....	51.1	59	28.8	60	73.3
g.....	55.7	38	36.9	43	74.4
Total or					
average:	42.6	197	25.4	202	60.3
Store No. 3:					
Cashier--					
h.....	69.0	35	54.4	36	83.5
i.....	54.0	35	37.2	34	70.7
Total or					
average:	61.5	70	45.8	70	77.1
Store No. 4:					
Cashier--					
j.....	42.6	67	32.9	67	52.2
k.....	69.1	68	50.0	59	88.1
Total or					
average:	55.9	135	41.5	126	70.2
Store No. 5:					
Cashier--					
l.....	70.5	44	52.3	45	88.6
m.....	47.6	52	32.7	56	62.5
Total or					
average:	59.1	96	42.5	101	75.6
Total or average:					
all cashiers..	54.3	630	38.8	634	69.8

Table 7.--Relationship between training methods and cashier courtesy, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization A, 1952--Continued

Training method, store, and cashier	Courtesy score (average of greeting and parting courtesy)	Greeting courtesy checkouts	Parting courtesy checkouts
	Percent	Number	Percent
	Number	Percent	Number
Training with cashier participation in--			
Store No. 6:			
Cashier--			
n.....	62.1	59	51.7
o.....	61.3	34	58.9
p.....	44.6	56	32.2
Total or average:	56.0	149	47.6
Store No. 7:			
Cashier--			
q.....	70.7	51	49.1
r.....	67.3	61	47.6
s.....	67.4	55	47.3
t.....	96.7	77	96.0
u.....	70.0	57	50.8
Total or average:	74.4	301	58.2
Store No. 8:			
Cashier--			
v.....	50.2	83	26.5
w.....	49.9	72	22.2
x.....	52.7	76	30.3
Total or average:	50.9	231	26.3
Total or average, all cashiers...	63.0	681	46.6

Table 8.--Relationship between training methods and cashier courtesy, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization B, 1952

Training method, store, and cashier	Courtesy score (aver-	Greeting courtesy		Parting courtesy	
	age of greetings and parting courtesy)	Customer Practice		Customer Practice	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Training by</u>					
<u>written instruc-</u>					
<u>tion in--</u>					
Store No. 1:					
Cashier--					
a.....	28.8	62	22.6	60	35.0
b.....	28.0	59	24.2	60	31.8
c.....	26.6	37	24.3	38	28.9
Total or					
average:	27.8	158	23.7	158	31.9
Store No. 2:					
Cashier--					
d.....	40.5	47	42.6	47	38.3
e.....	30.6	50	20.0	51	41.2
f.....	40.5	31	25.8	29	55.2
Total or					
average:	37.2	128	29.4	127	44.9
Store No. 3:					
Cashier--					
g.....	62.1	51	43.1	53	81.1
h.....	54.7	32	53.1	32	56.3
i.....	77.1	34	73.5	36	80.6
Total or					
average:	64.1	117	56.6	121	72.7
Total or average,					
all cashiers...	43.2	403	36.6	406	49.8
<u>Training with</u>					
<u>cashier participa-</u>					
<u>tion in--</u>					
Store No. 4:					
Cashier--					
j.....	63.5	63	58.7	66	68.2
k.....	41.2	46	34.8	42	47.6
l.....	71.2	42	64.3	41	78.0
Total or					
average:	58.6	151	52.6	149	64.6

Table 8.--Relationship between training methods and cashier courtesy, by stores and cashiers in supermarket organization B, 1952--
Continued

Training method, store, and cashier	: Courtesy		: Greeting courtesy		: Parting courtesy	
	: score (aver-	: age of greeting:	: Customer:	: Practice:	: Customer:	: Practice
	: and parting	: courtesy)	: checkouts:	: followed:	: checkouts:	: followed
	: Percent	: Number	: Percent	: Number	: Percent	
Training with	:	:	:	:	:	:
cashier participa-	:	:	:	:	:	:
tion in--Continued:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Store No. 5:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Cashier--	:	:	:	:	:	:
m.....	: 52.9	: 67	: 50.7	: 69	: 55.1	
n.....	: 56.0	: 51	: 56.9	: 49	: 55.1	
o.....	: 71.8	: 34	: 61.8	: 33	: 81.8	
Total or	:	:	:	:	:	:
average:	: 60.3	: 152	: 56.5	: 151	: 64.0	
Store No. 6:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Cashier--	:	:	:	:	:	:
p.....	: 54.8	: 27	: 48.1	: 26	: 61.5	
q.....	: 87.0	: 37	: 86.5	: 40	: 87.5	
Total or	:	:	:	:	:	:
average:	: 70.9	: 64	: 67.3	: 66	: 74.5	
Total or average,	:	:	:	:	:	:
all cashiers....	: 62.3	: 367	: 57.7	: 366	: 66.9	
	:	:	:	:	:	:

Procedures Followed in Conducting the Experiment

In order to test the effectiveness of the training methods used in this study to improve employee performance, it was necessary to (1) devise measures of cashier performance and (2) hold constant the factors other than training which might affect cashier performance.

The performance of a cashier cannot be measured on the basis of sales rung-up, customers checked out, or any other single factor. There is general agreement, however, on what constitutes a good cashier: She is courteous and industrious; she follows established procedures faithfully; and she accepts suggestions for improving her work. It was assumed that good training would improve cashier performance in each of these areas. Accordingly, independent measures were obtained for courtesy, industry, adherence to established checkout procedures, and following of new checkout procedures.

Cashiers were observed on each of these counts for fixed periods over a period of 4 weeks after they had received instruction. These observations consisted of two 30-minute periods each week, one observation during a time when the cashier was likely to be busy at the check stand, another at a time when the cashier was likely not to be busy checking out customers. During each observation, tallies were maintained of each customer checked out and the number of times the required action was omitted; for example, greeting customer or placing register receipt in the bag. The cashiers were aware that they were being observed, although they had been told that observations were being made to learn how they performed the checkout operation and not to evaluate how well. Nevertheless, it is to be assumed that they performed at their best and probably better than they would in the absence of observers. As previously indicated, this performance suggested that the differences observed between the two groups of cashiers was the minimum difference that existed.

In most cases, two actions were selected to represent the factor measured, such as courtesy or following established procedures. For example, courtesy was evaluated on the basis of a greeting to the customer on arriving at the check stand, and a parting courtesy as the customer left. "Following established procedure" was measured by how consistently the cashier placed money on the register ledge before making change, and how consistently register receipts were placed in the customer's bag of groceries. When the required action was not appropriate, for example, when a customer asked for the receipt and the cashier handed it to the customer, the checkout was not tallied on this point.

In order to test the validity of the findings, the experimental study was conducted in two supermarket organizations. One organization was a corporate chain having fewer than 20 stores. In this chain, some efforts toward instructing cashiers in a common operating procedure had been made, although formal centralized training sessions had not been undertaken. The other organization was a more loosely organized chain

having about 20 supermarkets in which some of the store managers were also the owners. No common operating procedure had been written down and no formal centralized training had been offered.

In each organization a group of stores was designated as "control" stores. To improve performance of cashiers in these stores, written instructions were used from time to time supplemented by comments from the store manager. This procedure was followed in all stores prior to the study; during the study it prevailed in the control stores. A group of like stores in each organization was selected and cashiers in this second group of stores were given the experimental training. The most important aspect of the experimental instruction was that it provided for cashier participation during a training conference and for informal discussions at the stores for a period of several weeks before the training date. Certain elements of training were introduced by the manner in which the research was done. As indicated in the report, these elements of training were present for control cashiers as well as those given the experimental training: (1) Manifestations of management interest in the cashiers' work; (2) close and consistent follow up.

Each group of stores in both organizations was matched for volume of business, number of cashiers, geographic location, recency of store opening or remodeling. Moreover, only those cashiers who were working full time with the organizations as cashiers were included in the study. In one supermarket organization there were 11 cashiers in the group of stores receiving the experimental training and 13 cashiers in the control group. In the second organization 8 cashiers received experimental training and 9 received training by memorandum.

Records were obtained on the number of hours on duty and the dollar sales rung-up for each cashier. For a 4-week period prior to the training date, the ratio of cashier hours to dollar sales rung-up indicated that the two groups of cashiers in both organizations were evenly matched on this score. Informal observations of cashiers before the training date indicated that, as a group, the control cashiers and those given experimental training were comparable.

The full potential value of employee participation may not have been realized in this study because the amount of time spent in personal visits among cashiers of these stores and in the training conference was severely limited by practical operating considerations. Since only experienced, on-the-job cashiers were included in the study, discussions with them about their work took place while they were at the check stand. Only a brief time was spent at the stores designated for experimental training in developing and testing the new procedure to be introduced. During the 3-week period prior to the training date, approximately 10 hours more were spent at the experimental group of stores than at the control stores. The training conference for cashiers of organization A took 2 hours; for cashiers of organization B, 1.5 hours; and since 20 minutes of this time was taken by the showing of a movie, relatively little time was available for group discussion on each point covered.

Training Material

Copies of the (1) training guide and (2) written instructions to cashiers which were developed for use in the study are reproduced below to illustrate the training methods followed. The training guide and the memorandum of instructions are not intended to cover all aspects of the checkout procedure nor to describe the best practices. The points covered are only those necessary for purposes of the controlled experiment. The procedures are those which were followed by the particular supermarket organizations in the study and may not be applicable to other stores. It is anticipated that modifications in the material covered and in the manner of presentation will be made by any stores planning to conduct a similar training program to improve cashier performance.

* * * * *

(1) TRAINING GUIDE FOR CASHIERS OF JOHN DOE'S SUPERMARKETS

(See that all cashiers are comfortably seated and are at ease before opening the meeting. Point out that they will be compensated for their time at this meeting if any are there on their day off. The atmosphere of the meeting should be that of an informal discussion group. The words used in this guide to indicate how the discussion should be directed need not be rigidly followed.)

Introduction

A. Purpose of the Meeting

1. To review some of the key points in the checkout operation.

"You will know many of the points to be covered in our discussion this morning. We will be concerned mostly with the reasons why these points should be observed and why they are so important--not only for our customer relations but also for making your job easier."

2. To get cashiers' views on some new suggestions and to get their ideas on how their job can be made easier.

"In talking with you cashiers in John Doe's supermarkets and in stores in other organizations in other cities some ideas have been developed which may help make your job easier. We will call your attention to some of these suggestions this morning. At the same time, you cashiers who are doing the job, may have ideas on how to make the work easier. We want to hear these ideas and if possible have other John Doe supermarket cashiers try them. We hope to be able to meet with you again from time to time to discuss new ideas on how to make your work easier."

B. Why this concern with cashiers

1. Cashiers are important in representing the store to John Doe supermarket customers.

"Cashiers come in contact with customers every time they shop at John Doe's supermarkets. It is at the checkout stand that good will can be built and customer grievances can most successfully be overcome. The cashier is the last person and frequently the only person in the store with whom the customer has contact. Therefore, if the cashier has been friendly, courteous, and efficient the customer is likely to remember John Doe's supermarket as being a friendly, courteous, and efficient store."

2. John Doe's supermarkets are concerned with customer relations because customer satisfaction is the one thing on which we can excel.

"As you know, John Doe's supermarkets constitute a relatively small supermarket organization. As a local organization we can and should be more friendly and more neighborly. Unless we do offer our customers courtesy and friendly service, they will as likely as not shop at some other supermarket."

3. John Doe's supermarkets are not only concerned with customer relations but are also concerned with making the cashier job easier, more pleasant, and more efficient.

"If you are happy on the job, we know John Doe's supermarket customers will feel happier in patronizing us. Besides, as a small organization we can be and are very much interested in each employee. Therefore, in this meeting we really want to hear from you about your work. Together, we can make your job easier and more pleasant for you and our customers."

4. Concern with cashiers goes beyond John Doe's supermarkets.

"As you know, the Department of Agriculture is working with you people on the checkout operation. The Department of Agriculture, and John Doe's supermarkets are anxious to reduce the cost of distributing food from the farmer to the consumer. We are anxious to hold down the cost of food distribution so that there will not be so great a spread between the prices the farmer gets for his product and the prices we pay as consumers. If the retailing operation can be made more efficient, the cost of distributing food through the retailer may be reduced and the savings passed on to the consumer. Cashiers play a very important part in the cost of retail food store operations. If we can help to make your job easier and more efficient we will have taken one step toward reducing the over-all cost of distributing food."

C. What will be covered in this meeting

1. Customer relations or minding your manners.

"John Doe's supermarket cashiers are courteous. We will mention only a few things about customer relations and how they contribute to your happiness on the job."

2. How to perform the checkout operation.

"Although you know the checkout operation, we want to mention several of the key points to bear in mind to make this part of your job as easy for you and as pleasant for our customers as possible."

3. How to manage your time on the job.

"Most of you are so busy most of the day that you don't have time to think about the time. But we want to point out how you can make your workday go even faster and how you can work together as a team with other cashiers and other John Doe's supermarket employees."

Minding Your Manners

A. Three C's for cashiers

1. There are 3 C's for cashiers to remember.

"The 3 C's stand for the three key words that cashiers should remember about customer relations. Would anybody want to guess what those three words are?"

(Ask cashiers for words beginning with the letter "C" which are important to remember in customer relations. Ask them to give reasons for the importance of the word they mention. Try to get agreement on the three mentioned here, namely, courtesy, cleanliness, and cheerfulness.)

"Courtesy is probably the most important thing to remember in checking out a customer. You know how you feel when shopping. People want you to notice them. So don't treat your customers like a box of cereal to be checked out mechanically. Look at each customer as she comes to the check stand. Acknowledge her presence by saying 'good morning' or some other appropriate pleasantry. Say 'thank you, call again' as she leaves. Be courteous at all times, even if a customer appears irritable or unreasonable."

"Cleanliness in a food store is something your customers expect. If you are personally neat and clean looking you help give that impression for the entire store. So wear a clean apron or smock, keep your hands and nails clean, your hair combed."

"Cheerfulness is important because your customers react to the way you feel. If you are cheerful they are more likely to be cheerful. You will find that your day will be pleasant if you treat your customers in a pleasant manner. Have any of you had an experience recently where you have found a customer responding to your smile or pleasantness?"

(Try to elicit personal experiences on this point from the cashiers.)

B. Movie on courtesy

(Introduce the movie by appropriate small talk on its relevance.)

C. Handling problem customers

"We have talked about courtesy and we have seen a movie in which courtesy was illustrated. I know you have all had experiences where it was almost impossible to treat a particular customer with courtesy. It might be helpful to discuss how some of these problem customers can best be handled."

"How would you handle these situations?" (Ask one of the cashiers to describe what she would do in each case.)

(1) "The customer says an item is priced too high and she can get it for less at a competitor's store."

(2) "The customer says the head of lettuce is bruised and she thinks she should get it for 5 cents less."

(3) "The customer complains that there is no selection of meats on display."

(4) "The customer says her last order wasn't delivered on time and some cottage cheese she bought was sour when the order arrived."

Performing the Checkout Operation

"You all know how to do the checkout operation. Many of you have been doing it for years. We will not discuss the checkout operation today in any detail. We will just mention a few things with which you are already familiar and a few things that may help make your job easier. I want to emphasize that the correct way of doing the job is almost

always the easy way. You have all watched good swimmers and poor swimmers. The poor swimmer works very hard, kicks up a lot of water and doesn't get anywhere. The good swimmer seems to use very little effort but almost glides through the water. The difference is that the good swimmer has learned to use his hands and feet correctly. You know cashiers who appear to work smoothly and those who appear to make a lot of disturbance and do not get much accomplished. The difference is that one has learned how to do her job correctly and follows correct methods. The other does not."

A. Some reminders about the checkout operation

"I want to call your attention to several key points in performing the checkout operation correctly. If you follow the correct procedures your work will be easier and, like the good swimmer, you will get more accomplished with less effort."

1. Announce the price of each sale item rung-up.

"You all know that if a customer watches any price, she watches the price she is charged on a special sale item. Well, how can we assure her that she is being charged only the sale price--no matter what price appears on the package?"

(See whether the cashiers will come up with the idea of announcing these sale prices. Consider alternatives raised but seek agreement on announcing the prices as they are rung-up.) Use the following arguments: "When you announce the sale price of the item as you ring it up, the customer's attention is called to it and she sees you are charging her the correct price. Giving her the correct price on sale items gives the customer confidence in the entire transaction. It may take a little more time to checkout a customer when you announce prices of sale items but it's worth the time to build customer confidence. Besides, you'll find that after you have been doing this for several weeks, you will do it automatically with little loss of time."

2. Use the subtotal key for tax items and again at the end of the order.

"Most of you ring up tax items first and then subtotal to get your tax into the register at one time. You will also find it helpful to subtotal after all the items are rung-up. Then you can ask whether the customer wishes anything else, for example, cigarettes, and include such extra purchases on the same order without writing it on the register slip. Besides, when you use the subtotal key your register drawer will remain closed until the customer hands you the money in payment."

3. Announce the amount of money the customer presents in payment and the amount to be taken out.

"When you announce the amount of money the customer presents you in payment and the amount to be taken out, there is less likelihood that you will make an error in giving change. Say, for example, '\$4.10 out of \$5.00'. You and the customer are both aware of the amount of change to be given so there is less likelihood of a difference of opinion on the subject."

4. Place the money that a customer gives you on the ledge of your register. Place bills face up.

"When you place bills on the register ledge, you will find there is less likelihood of error. A difference of opinion as to the amount a customer has presented in payment is less likely to arise if the money is on the register ledge while you are making change. Besides, if you have placed the bills face up you can more readily put them into the register face up and in order. Placing bills in the register in order saves somebody else a great deal of time when receipts are counted."

(Make motion with hands showing turning up and turning around of bills in a typical counting operation.)

5. Place cash register receipt in customer's bag of groceries.

"It is very important that the cash register receipt be placed in the customer's bag so that she has a record of prices charged. Many customers do check these prices when they get home and this assures them that each item has been correctly charged. The presence of the cash register receipt tells them that we welcome their checking the correctness of the prices charged. Don't toss the receipt on the counter or hand it to the customer--put it in the bag with the order."

6. Use the check-stand well or stepdown in bagging when you can.

(Acknowledge differences in check stands and indicate that remarks refer to those having check stand wells or stepdowns.)

"You will find that when you place the bag in the check-stand well that bagging is much easier on your arms. You don't need to raise your arms so high or move the items so far even on longer check stands. You will have less distance to move the items that you bag if you start the checkout operation by pulling the expediter to the front edge of the register. Then when you push the items across the imaginary line in ringing them up, the order will be at the edge of stepdown and in easy position for bagging."

Using Your Time

"You are all familiar with the homemaker who appears to have time for everything and gets everything done that she has planned. You also know homemakers who never appear to have time for anything and never appear to get anything done. The difference is usually that one plans and budgets her time, the other does not. The homemaker who gets things done is one who uses her time efficiently. In the check-stand operation it is well to bear this in mind. Manage your check stand as you would your home. Let me mention a few points that will help you. I would like your opinions on whether you think they will work for you or how they have worked when you have tried them."

A. Organize your check stand to save yourself effort

"In organizing your work, the easy way is the right way. If you can perform a job more easily, use the easier way whenever possible. Here are some tips on good check-stand organization which some of you are already using. You probably can suggest other ideas. Keep things you reach for often conveniently at hand. For example, don't keep cigarettes, coupons, or certain sizes of grocery bags that you need often on the floor of the check stand where you would need to bend way down to get them. Keep them within easy reach on ledge or drawer at near counter height as possible. If you cash coupons often during the day, a spindle beside your register or on a ledge at register height is helpful. Keep your register at a slight angle to the counter so that you can more easily reach items and move them down the check stand after ringing them up." (Ask cashiers for other ideas.)

B. Get ready for company--before they come

"See that your register is in good order, that bills are face up, the roll of tape is full, and that you have enough change. See that you have a good supply of different sizes of bags that you need. You will find that taking care of customers is easier when you are ready to serve them before they come. The checkout operation will be easier and smoother if it is not interrupted by a need for change or a particular size of bag. Get ready for customers--before they're lined up at your check stand."

C. Take care of displays near your check stand

"When there are no customers to serve at the check stand, you have an opportunity to tidy up the displays near your check stand. When you look after displays near you, such as candy, cigarettes, cookies, and magazines, you will find you have a nicer place in which to work. Your manager can tell you a number of things that you can do within sight of the check stand. Then, when a customer comes to your check stand, you can return immediately. You will find that when you are

occupied with these other things around your check stand that your workday actually goes faster and your work is likely to be less tiring. As you know, time goes most quickly when you are busy doing a number of things."

"When your manager has told you of things near the check stand, which you can do, you need not wait until he suggests these things each day. Do them as your time and as customer traffic permit." (Emphasize using their own judgment.)

(Ask cashiers about the kind of things that they have been doing around the check stand and ask for expressions of opinion as to whether doing these things makes their work harder or makes their day more interesting and the time pass more quickly.)

D. Help with the bagging

"When you have a bagger assisting you, there are times when you have rung-up the order and he is still putting merchandise into the bag. It is a good idea to help him by putting merchandise in a second bag if the order is a large one or by handing items to him to bag. When there are customers waiting at your check stand they appreciate it when they see you are expediting the checkout rather than when you appear to be idle until the bagging is done."

"There may also be times when you can help one of the other cashiers by assisting her in bagging. Do this when you can--you will find that the help you give will be returned. I know that you have all had the experience that when you are helpful to others in the store they are helpful to you in turn."

E. Keep an accounting of your time

"As you know, you have been keeping timecards for the last several weeks. We are asking you to continue to keep these timecards for 4 more weeks. Make your entries to the nearest 5 minutes and record all breaks in your regular check stand work even if it is only for 5 or 10 minutes. If you work at more than one register during the day, be sure you note under 'remarks' or by using a separate slip the amount of time you spend at each check stand."

(Hold up a timecard as you discuss this point. Ask if there are any questions on filling out timecards.)

(Thank them for coming and for their help in discussing their work. Ask USDA representative to say a few words on what will be done during the next weeks.)

(2) MEMORANDUM OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR CASHIERS

How to make your job easier--more pleasant--more efficient

You, as a cashier, represent John Doe stores to our customers. The manager and assistant manager can personally greet and talk with only a few customers each week. But you, as a cashier, are in contact with our customers every time they come into the store. When you are friendly, neat, and courteous, then they think of John Doe that way. Because your part in the store's operation is so important, we are setting down some of the key things to remember about your job:

Minding your manners

Remember the three C's for cashiers: Courtesy; cleanliness; cheerfulness.

Courtesy: Greet your customer as she comes to the check stand, say "good morning" or "good evening" and say "thank you, call again" as she leaves. Be courteous at all times--even if a customer appears irritable or unreasonable.

Cleanliness: Be clean and well groomed. Wear a clean apron or smock, keep your hands and nails clean, hair combed.

Cheerfulness: Be cheerful in voice and manner. Your customers respond to your manners--make your day pleasant by being pleasant.

Performing the checkout operation

Remember--the correct way is the easy way.

1. Announce the price of each sale-priced item to the customer as you ring it up.
2. Announce the amount of money the customer presents in payment and the amount to be taken from it, as "\$2.50 out of \$5.00."
3. Use the subtotal key for tax items and again at the end of the order.
4. Place money given in payment on ledge of register, place bills face up while you make change, then place them in register face up and in order.
5. Place cash register receipt in the bag. Place the receipt in the bag with the last item--don't hand it to the customer.
6. Use the check stand stepdown or bagging well whenever possible to bag merchandise--you will find it is easier on the arms. Pull the expeditor to the front edge of the register, then when you

push the items across the imaginary line in ringing them up the order will be in easy position to bag in the well.

Using your time

Remember, take care of your check stand as you do your home--be a good housekeeper.

1. Get ready for company--before they come. See that your register is in good order, that bills are face up, the tape is full, change is adequate. Taking care of customers is easier when you are ready to serve them before they come.
2. Take care of the displays near your check stand when there are no customers to serve. Looking after displays of candy, cigarettes, cookies, and other merchandise near your check stand gives you a nicer place in which to work--and it will help to make your day go faster.
3. Help with the bagging. When you have a bagger assisting you, there are times when you have rung-up the order and he is still putting merchandise into the bag. It is a good idea to help him by putting merchandise in a second bag if the order is a large one or by handing items to him to bag. Waiting customers appreciate it when you are expediting the checkout rather than appearing to be idle until the bagging is done. When you can help one of the other cashiers by assisting her in bagging--do so. You'll find the help will be returned.
4. Keep an accounting of your time--Remember to keep up your daily timecard. Make your entries to the nearest 5 minutes and if you work at more than one register during the day be sure you note under "remarks," or by using a separate timecard, the amount of time you spent at each check stand.

